

ENQUIRY

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WHERE WE STAND

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WHERE WE STAND

In these days of the ebb-tide of radical politics, a new venture, however modest, requires little justification. We are interested in offering a special kind of political and social analysis—one which expresses a point of view not fully represented by any political organization or publication. This orientation couples a revolutionary outlook with a thoroughgoing concern for the maintenance and the extension of the procedures and institutions of democracy. But this broad outlook will, we believe, set more problems than it will solve; for we come forward at a time when the strategy of progressive social action has largely to be worked out anew, against the background of new information, of new ideas. Our function, therefore, will be to stimulate discussion around the crucial issues which face us, as well as to present a critical analysis of trends on the current scene.

It will be readily apparent that those concerned in the publication of this magazine are faced with a dual set of problems. One the one hand, they are involved as deeply as thousands of others in the moral crisis which is fast becoming a permanent feature of our time. This difficulty is rooted in the fact that we are today facing a world revolution one of whose central features is the frustration of democracy by the very fact of organized mass effort. At the same time, we do not believe that, because we have not known enough about some things, our knowledge of a whole series of other questions has suddenly turned out to be false. The old social evils remain; the need for a social overturn has not lessened. And the bankruptcy of the reformist policy of supporting the "lesser evil," of compromise with the status quo, is not less complete today than it was a decade ago. We want to put democracy first: before class privilege, before appeals to patriotism, before party banner. That is what shapes our policy both in relation to the fight for immediate democratic gains and with regard to the broader problems of social reorganization. And it is our opinion that political support of the present war, organized by reactionary forces

and deepening the totalitarian trend, will be found to be incompatible with a consistent fight for concrete democratic aims. We do not mean by this to cut ourselves off from all those who believe that an Anglo-American victory is, for one reason or another, preferable to one by the Axis. Verbal commitments one way or another are not in themselves decisive. We earnestly desire to work with all who are willing to fight for the kind of democracy which finds its life in the hearts and actions of men, rather than in the myths and symbols of the mass-manipulators.

Our concern does not lie with the preservation of any received set of traditions, nor does our political faith rest on the assurance provided by any dogmatic political code. We are radicals because we are opposed to things as they are and to the dominant forces which are molding that dark future which looms beyond our immediate horizons. Yet, while some of us may owe allegiance to one or another of the existing groupings, none of us necessarily believes that there exists today an adequate and final organized expression of the new radicalism which must intelligently absorb the experiences of the past two generations of democratic struggle. In this effort, we wish to maintain a spirit of free inquiry, for only when disinterested analysis provides the facts, tells us what is, can we determine the concrete character of what ought to be.

It is important to make clear that while the individuals associated in this enterprise, and more particularly the contributing editors, share a common general perspective on many questions, they do not necessarily agree in everything or in detail, nor are they to be held jointly responsible for the views of signed articles in the magazine. And it is well that that is so. For this is not the organ of another sect, with a special political axe to grind. Our main task is to stimulate discussion, to bring together men of similar but not identical minds for participation in an urgent intellectual and political enterprise: the determination of the long-time strategy of progressive social action.

PERSPECTIVE OF LEFTIST POLITICS

by Lillian Symes

It seems incredible now, that there was once an age of innocence and intellectual security on the Left when—at least in the western democracies—the major problem confronting it seemed to be the conversion of enough people to the “socialist ideal.”

That problem did not exist for the Bolsheviks of that time nor does it exist today for the orthodox Leninist to whom The Revolution is merely a matter of a happy conjunction of an objective circumstance and a subjective force—a world-wide “revolutionary situation” which will “set the masses in motion” and a small, determined, revolutionary party capable of riding to power on the crest of that motion and of maintaining power once it has been achieved. But for those who have never accepted or who—out of the experience of the past ten years—have rejected the Jacobin concept of revolutionary transition, who have come to understand that democracy, like peace, is indivisible, the situation is not so simple. In fact, for wide sections of the Left, it has become too painfully complicated to bear thinking about; and so, many of them have stopped thinking about it for the duration of the war, trusting that the war itself, being a “people’s war” and a “revolutionary crusade” will somehow do the trick automatically, dropping The Revolution into their laps on the day of the Armistice. Others, including many who embraced the New Deal as a “temporary” bulwark against reaction, are living, politically, in a state of suspended animation, waiting for something to “develop” on the Left. Even that sector of the Left which, in the face of such overwhelming odds, has maintained its political activity and identity along with its dedication to “democratic socialism,” has little faith in its own destiny as an instrument of social change. It is merely marking time, “holding the fort,” waiting for something to happen, something that will lift from its tired shoulders the heavy burden of socialist purpose.

What is the nature of this Second Coming, this Renaissance so eagerly or wistfully awaited by the organized and disorganized forces of the Left who know now that the Socialist Revolution is not necessarily the natural heir of a “revolutionary situation” or the seizure of power a guarantee of Socialist ends?

The perspective of the American Leftist in this period is a dual one—made up of what he expects or hopes to happen in Europe and what he expects or hopes to happen here, and while the two reflect and impinge upon one another, they are not likely to merge. There is the perspective that in Europe the war will end in revolutionary upheavals from which a new Socialist order will emerge immediately; or, less spectacularly, in the political triumph of the BLP and of the social democratic forces on the Continent which, cured of their pre-war lethargy, will proceed speedily though gradually to transform the war economy into a Socialist economy. (A perspective for an Axis triumph scarcely exists.) For the United States, following either complete victory or a stalemate, the outlook is less dramatic. Even should the war be followed by a crash far worse than that of 1929 and on.

there is probably little likelihood of actual revolution, especially if the New Deal (long since a euphemism) remains in power after 1944. But at the least, the "post-war dislocations," the attempts of business to return to "normalcy," wide-spread unemployment and the heavy burden of taxation, with the collapse of national unity, war-time pressures and exaltations—will result in tremendous unrest, ferment and disillusionment and a leftward drive surpassing that of the early thirties in this country, receiving additional stimulus from the revolutionary ferment, the developing "new order" abroad. Such a situation must produce one of two developments: the New Deal Democratic machine (if it outlasts the war) will be driven swiftly to the Left, becoming a sort of labor-populist edition of the British Labor Party; or a new Labor Party will arise, based initially on the more militant CIO and AFL unions—a party in which the various Leftists can find a refuge and which they can permeate gradually with a Socialist perspective.

Few Leftists today,—outside the more bedizened Social Democrats, some of the Permanent Nepmen around *Commonsense* and a few wishful thinkers among the young New Deal bureaucrats—believe that there is any chance that the New Deal will "move to the left" either during or after the present war—unless the whole tendency toward the centralization of political power and economic control is, in itself, a "Left" tendency. The Roosevelt-Wallace machine will remain in power in the Democratic Party and in the nation, only so long as it has the Solid South behind it and it has already, in 1932-36, moved as far to the Left as that bloc will permit. When faced with a serious post-war crisis, its inevitable reaction—the only reaction possible to a capitalist party in this period—will be the maintenance and extension of its extraordinary war-time controls over the emerging "planned economy" and the "managerial revolution." In view of this more or less obvious situation, the "new development" to which the average American Leftist today is pinning his hopes for the future is a new, all-inclusive labor party, a consumer-farmer-worker party sufficiently militant and purposeful from its very beginnings to harness the wave of the future to the production of a democratic society.

The dilemma of democratic Leftist politics then lies in the fact that having repudiated the Jacobin concept of the seizure and maintenance of power in a revolutionary situation by a small determined minority (not merely as a matter of ethics but as a matter of long-range practical politics) the Leftist finds himself in the midst of a world-revolutionary period (there seems general agreement on this) while he must await the development—for it certainly cannot happen overnight—of a type of political organization which, historically, should have developed in a period of capitalist expansion. And the best he can hope for is that such an organization will develop *rapidly* enough, under the pressure of circumstances, a revolutionary character and program commensurate to the objective situation; that at the same time, functional organizations—labor unions, cooperatives, possibly farm groups, etc.—of which it is the political expression will also develop rapidly enough in size, power, responsibility and social perspective to keep pace with the economic revolution and to establish

the framework of a democratic functional society while political power is being achieved.

This is a large order to be placed so late on the calendar of history and at a time when the economic revolution is already well under way. And the intelligent Leftist knows it—hence the wistful and almost despairing note with which he usually talks about “future developments.” Without that hope, or some similar one, he is thrown back upon the small resources of the present organized Left (whose function today is indeed an indispensable one), upon the occasional militant gesture of this or that group of workers, or upon a lingering illusion about a post-war Newer Deal.

Nevertheless, though the development of new mass forces on the Left in the post-war era may seem as logical as it is desirable, the Socialist (lower and upper case) and left-labor forces in general cannot afford to put all their eggs in this one basket. For it may not happen—and still all may not be lost. For within the frame-work of democratic action and purpose, there is still a function for militant minorities which are not concerned primarily with power for themselves. Only under the conditions of today and tomorrow, this function requires a dedication, a clarity of purpose, an understanding of their role and of the objective situation which is almost wholly missing on the democratic Left today—which continues to function like a mass movement, deploying its small energies in every possible direction, refusing to face the logic, as well as the possibilities, of its size.

Those Leftists and laborites who have embraced the New Deal as “practical” radical and labor politics in the past eight years bear a heavy responsibility for our political unpreparedness for any crisis that lies ahead. The New Deal, with their support, has prevented the development of an independent political mass movement out of the Long Depression, a movement in which the idealism, insight and energy of the Left could function and bear fruit, while by its own very nature, its origin and control, the New Deal was incapable of developing beyond the Bismarkian pattern of social reform as a deterrent to social conflict. Today that pattern is well adapted to the demands of an emerging Total State.

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Reading the press these days is, at best, a depressing chore. However, there remains the occasional item, the bland euphemism of which affords one a dry laugh. We thought the following item a classic.

A recent New York Post (wonderful for this sort of thing) headlined the article, Red Freedom for Religion Called Real. A rather striking claim, so we paused and read. “At Yaroslavsk, an old Orthodox priest was quietly teaching children of Christian families. He was summoned by the NKVD and told to reopen his church. He suspected a trap and asked to see the orders from Moscow . . . Only a small percentage of the Greek Orthodox churches, however, have been reopened. At Yaroslavsk, for example, only one of the forty still standing is functioning. The chief difficulty is a shortage of priests.”

DILEMMA OF SOCIAL IDEALISM

by Philip Selznick

'These are the days of the storm of reaction.' This would be a platitudinous statement were not its true meaning so widely distorted. The broad ranks of those who are concerned over social affairs see this reaction in the forward march of the Nazi armies. Despite brave words and fiery challenges, the ideology has spread far and wide that the conquests of Hitler are by and large inviolable, at least against the pressure of mass revolutionary effort. Abandoning all hope in the viability of popular insurgence, pliant to every pressure of entrenched authority, the current leaders of progressive opinion have rested all their hopes on the armed might of an apparatus which they do not control—one whose objective aims have little in common with the noble ideals of its apologists. 'The victories of Nazism are terrible indeed. But they do not put a period to everything. The Gestapo cannot reach into all of Europe as it has done in Germany; it cannot root out the hundreds of thousands of trained socialists and anarchists who will organize tomorrow's insurrections; nor can it escape the popular upheavals which are the fruits of social oppression. And in a larger sense, the military victories of fascism cannot be considered the basic source of the truly immense barriers which have been placed in the way of progressive social action.

Those who are serious about a struggle for democracy, who look for it in behavior and not in words, must surely recognize the strength of the empirical forces arrayed against them. To do less than that would be to indulge in the kind of fancy which can lead only to empty phrase-mongering and sloganeering. No effective program can be formulated without taking into account the real forces with which one has to deal. The concrete social influences representing an anti-democratic trend are far more extensive than the Nazi legions. They are root and branch, the social structures, the apparatus, of the democratic states; they are gaining ground in a politicalized labor bureaucracy, striving to find a place for itself in the developing "integrated" social order; they have so transformed the latterly liberal leadership that now it is but a meekly loyal opposition to infringements of an increasingly select number of civil liberties; they have used the bludgeon of "patriotism" so ably as to virtually decapitate those popular movements which could strike heavy blows for concrete democracy. In the adding up of pros and cons, it is evident that the greatest weakness of the mass democratic movement is that of leadership. There is pressure from the ranks in America—among the Negroes, in the labor movement—but a leadership bound hand and foot to a program which dares not put democracy first has frustrated the struggle at one point after another. Yet we know that leaders can be changed, that great social events can bring disaster to the authority and prestige of those who today may seem firmly entrenched in the seats of power. This too is not the greatest difficulty. Would that it were. For then, courage and patience and organization would suffice.

Totalitarian reaction rides high today because it is in accord with

one of the fundamental trends of our times. The broad pattern of social change today is relatively clear. The tendency is toward unity, integration, planning—toward the concentration of social power in the hands of a polyglot ruling class basing itself on the collectivisation of economic life. We may speculate about specific phases and mechanisms of this trend, for the evidence of its detail is not and cannot be entirely clear. In any case, it is the broad picture which counts. The authoritarian state is a political form adapted to an economic collectivism which is the product of a long historical development. It must be expected, therefore, that some kind of statism will be the dominant political form for some time to come—until economic institutions can be developed which will not require integration by an all-powerful state. Yet there is a curious fatalism which has developed in this connection: the notion that to think in these terms is to predict the inevitable victory of a rigid, brutal fascist state. But history does not develop according to the rules of some immanent logic. Within this broad social trend, many variations are possible. The extent to which democracy prevails will depend upon many social conditions, not the least important of which will be the strength of those who are willing to organize and fight from below, depending upon and creating institutional mechanisms whose social fabric is consistent with and a part of democratic action. The dominant tide can be molded and it may one day be overcome. For here again it is a matter of empirical forces. A new outlook rooted in the *persistent and permanent* struggle for concrete democratic gains can mobilize strength for practical achievement. So long as centrifugal society divides men into classes, so long as exploitation persists, a mass base will be at hand. Here, too, there is no ground for moral enervation. When something can be accomplished, when we feel that there remains some relation between what we want and the possibilities posed by the real world, we can hold up our heads even though the struggle for control in society as a whole may go against us. To be dominant in society is not the only conceivable end of social action. To be able to *strike a blow* is the decisive criterion.

It is only when we lack confidence in the very hand we raise, when we feel that that is somehow an alien thing, only then has the ultimate corrosive been introduced; and that leads inexorably to complete sterility.

For the real crisis is a moral one. If men fell by the way only because of the strength of the opposing tide, the crisis in which we live would not cut so deeply into the souls of individual men, nor would it be so disastrous. For in time they would be rallied again, as they have always been. It is rather that the faith of men in the viability of their own ideals is nearing collapse. The fear is growing that action itself is impermissible, for men have looked upon the attendant consequences of action and have found them evil. It is as if we dared not do anything at all, in the fear that anything we may do will bring unintended evil in its wake. Nor is this a retreat into an old-style ivory tower. The desire for moral action remains; hence the frustration.

This frustration is not simply an apology for inaction (though for some it may have become that); it has roots in the world of actual experience. Moreover, it is necessary to attain clarity as to the basis

of this collapse, for it will be met only by the explicit recognition of the facts and the hammering out of a policy which will take them into account. It will not be affected by the wholesale denial of what is becoming ever clearer to all but the opportunists and the small circles of tradition-bound ideologists.

Without attempting an exhaustive discussion, let us indicate three factors which have been crucially operative in shaping our moral crisis. They are (1) the broadening recognition of the frustration of ideal goals by the very fact of organization; (2) the pragmatists' dilemma; and (3) the prevalent false basis of social action.

(1) The tragedy of organization is profound and extensive. Many of us are only now coming to realize how thoroughgoing it is. We have long been accustomed to changes in the character of organizations, to the rise of bureaucracy, the introduction of conservatism, the general deflection of action and policy from the original goals for which organizations were constructed. But in the past we have damned particular men or special circumstances, confident that ideas, goodwill, and the needs of the masses would ultimately prevail. Most men have not felt that there was anything inherent in the character of the organizational process which cast a shadow over the future. But today that optimism is being tempered, where it is not buried in despair. For we now know that the very fact of organization produces consequences, wholly unintentioned and undesired, which thwart the will of those who initiate cooperative effort. The attempted mass movements in the past century have highlighted this frustration, but the evidence for its general incidence is more abundant. The delegation of functions, the transformation of motives, the dependence of the ranks upon the leadership, the concentration of control over apparatus in the hands of small groups, and in general the inexorable pressure of the need to get things done in given social situations working against the ideal or desired means of accomplishment—this is a general process shaping the character of all organized action. Nor is it a question of "good" or "bad" leaders: it is a matter of the social situation within which men live and work, and which, for large groups at least, are decisive.

In the field of political behavior, Robert Michels' *Political Parties* analyzes most clearly this phenomenon. Michels believed that oligarchy was the inevitable product of democracy, since democracy cannot exist without organization involving the use of agents. The interests of these latter tend to split off from those of the initiators of action, they seize control of the apparatus, and use it to maintain themselves in power through mass-manipulation and other familiar devices. This thesis when stated very baldly, is open to serious criticism. As Sidney Hook has pointed out, Michels' theory is based on psychological postulates. He can speak of "inevitability" because he is using a theory of intrinsic human nature. But this objection loses its force when Michels' ideas are reformulated so that a social theory is constructed. If we but ground changes in motivation in the transformation effected by social situations, if the notion of inevitability is qualified by the specification of cultural conditions, then a theory involving a rigid human psychology is no longer required.

Organizational frustration is based on the relative inability of the mass of men to deal adequately with the tools of organized action. It is this basic incompetence which makes the mass-man — *who may be an intellectual as easily as a worker* — dependent upon his agents, who soon become his leaders. This process is conditioned by the cultural level of the participants, who are usually untrained in the procedures by which organizational control is retained in the body politic.

This general tendency is not an "iron law," though Michels considered it that. It is the way organizations will develop under present social conditions, if they are permitted to take the line of least resistance. This is a tendency which can be blocked, though it can probably never be completely controlled until the cultural level of the body of participants is far higher than anything we know of today. To deter the dominant drift, it is necessary to institute procedures of opposition, of persistent and permanent struggle from below. Democracy can survive only when the concentration of power in the hands of a single social force is avoided, when factions and interests vie for power. In a trade union, democracy prevails when there are organized factions in conflict. Whether corrupt or not, the easiest path of an unopposed leadership is that of cancelling out the influences of the rank-and-file.

It is an unavoidable conclusion that such phenomena as the widespread manipulation of masses and the inertia of the majority, as well as the essential human dignity involved in the struggle of a minority, must lead us away from any notion which tends to identify democracy with majority rule. The majority does not rule; it may influence events, more at some times than at others, but in the main we will be able to trace democratic behavior through the action of opposition, of conflict, of pressure on the rulers. And it is true, too, that in general it is not majorities but minorities who are interested in democratic procedures.

The tragedy of organization gives to organized purposive effort an initial presumption of 'ill-consequence.' The effect is of necessity an emphasis on the limitations of political effort, rather than an unqualified optimism. But neither moral vigor nor action need be sacrificed by such an approach, provided these limits are realistically embedded in the definition of ends and means. It has the additional advantage of weakening—without severing—those biases which bind us to special interpretations of the course of events, and conversely encouraging the recognition of truths established by evidence.

(2) One of the characteristic values of our time has been a devotion to science. It is not simply that men have sought truth; for this they have ever done. It is rather that a special conception of truth has been evolved, one grounded on the explicitly recognized procedures of experimental science. Truth has come to be thought of as pragmatic, instrumental, dependent for its validity on the weight of evidence as adduced from the controlled manipulation of materials. In being tied down to the world of experience, truth had a role to play, both on its own level as science and for broader social purposes. Science was to be an instrument of social emancipation; and the latter, as experimental action, was to forward the scientific ideal. Marxism raised the

banner of a scientific socialism, and proposed to conquer in its name. Men spoke hopefully of a scientific ethics.

But in a deeply significant sense, science has betrayed its promise. Truth does not carry the world before it. Of course special truths, specific kinds of scientifically valid knowledge, are effective in action. But they are ethically neutral, as useful to those who abhor the scientific temper as to those who value it. Indeed, in some cases, specific truths are of more value to the former: thus the techniques of mass-manipulation and of total war are vastly more appalling because of their social consequences than prized because of their status as truths. This ethical neutrality of science as a body of knowledge has left those who sought a way of life in the search for specific truths with little in the way of a morally significant conduct.

Nor have truths been more effective than lies in swaying men. Those who maintain the ideal of "speaking truly" are at a perpetual disadvantage in social and political intercourse. "You cannot build a movement on the basis of semantics," a friend of mine once said. Of course no one has tried to do that as yet. But other evidence doubtless provides the statement with an initial presumption of validity. The fact is that, as in the case of democracy, there is only a minority which values truth beyond its technological utility.

These factors, plus the general failure of science to retard the advance of reaction, have provided a source of frustration which cannot be gainsayed. We shall learn from the days to come whether science conceived as a method and a temper can create a significant moral vitality on its own account. That is surely what is important for the true pragmatist; for it is necessary not simply to use truth, to think of it as instrumental, but to use it in such a way as to broaden the possibilities of free inquiry as a kind of behavior. And those who have based their hopes on the pragmatic value of specific truths will have to retrace their steps.

(3) One of the gravest problems of modern idealism will be that of winning the old ranks away from the idea that only the prospect of political dominance can justify action. There are two main currents which must be fought. Firstly, there are the "practical" politicians of social reform, who have fostered the ideology that it is essential to be assured of success before a struggle can be justified. To be sure, the psychological buoyancy of the liberal leaders has not affected their position in the real world. Bound fast to forces which they do not control, they are rarely able to make decisions. Far from exercising power, they can do no more than putter in its shadow. Yet they have obviously had a great deal to do with the way in which the ideas of socially conscious men have been shaped. The philosophy of "getting something done," above all through the regular, respectable, legalist channels, rules the liberal roost. It matters little that what is achieved is but a pale reflection of what had been desired and what was necessary. Nor have the moral compromises, which political commitments to alien forces have demanded, served to turn them from their course.

But the policies of our modern unprincipled liberals have led only to defeats. In Weimar Germany, in the France of the *Front Populaire*,

in the Spain in which their hero Negrin handed over his government to the GPU, in the America of the liberal Roosevelt who wages war with the armies of reaction—throughout the world, the history of the past two decades has been one of triumphal speeches and advances to the rear. Yet as the reaction deepens, a new generation of idealists will level the authority of the existing leadership. Their revolt will gain little for the long run, however, if they do not realize that the very basis of political action must be changed. The cords of fixation which have bound them to governmental institutions must be broken. They must learn that as moral men they can and must carry on a struggle for its own sake. And they must look for practical achievement in the kind of organized mass action which, free from commitments to *any* status quo, can put concrete democracy first.

The second current which has introduced a false basis of political action has been the Marxist. While many of the uninitiated have thought of the Marxist movement as essentially utopian, the fact is that its main appeal has been practical. This practical appeal had two primary sources. On the one hand, the movement convinced its adherents that to be a Marxist was to be attuned to the basic forces of the real world. They were assured that the proletariat alone would surely conquer and that it was thus eminently realistic to identify oneself with what was taken to be the aspirations of the workers as a class. On the other hand, the Leninist critique of organized social action provided a powerful organ for practical revolutionary enterprise. They were able to prove, usually with considerable success, that the policies of reformism and sectarianism would gain little in the way of immediate gains and nothing in the long run. Many of the basic principles of Leninism stand firm today, though they may require some reformulation. And, as others have shown, in some ways Leninism contradicted the Marxist outlook. But it joined with its ideological parent in molding a movement which was oriented completely toward total political dominance. Its followers could see no sense in action which did not make that its goal.

The triumph of Stalinism, the Stalinization of Trotzkyism, the continued hopelessness of milk-and-water socialism, and the incompatibility of modern Marxism with a scientific temper, have driven many ex-Marxians away from all political action. Some, losing all moral bearings, have fled to an undisguised opportunism; others, more sensitive to conscience, have taken to a prolonged soul-searching. But most are simply inert, feeling more or less deeply the absence of moral political behavior.

Our problem is not one only of strategy and tactics. It is possible to speak with a fair degree of confidence about the methods for achieving proximate goals. The crisis is one of ultimate values, of outlook, of orientation, of the personality of what must be a new social grouping. The question is moral because it asks: how can we control our present behavior so that it shall be in accordance with our ultimate values and distant goals?

SCIENCE: METHOD AND MORALITY

by Gertrude Jaeger

Action may be considered moral (1) when ideal goals control behavior and (2) when that control raises problems of choice—of a far-reaching and crucial nature—between the ideal goal and other ends. The means chosen to attain the ideal goal constitute a morality. Any morality, to be worth much at all, must be stringent. It must be a control and a restraint. Consequently, the goal must be as specific as possible; a morality based on a vague and unspecified end cannot provide rules for behavior. And perhaps most important of all, a morality worthy of the name must involve intelligent choice within a concrete situation. If it is merely a set of rules unaffected by particular circumstances, it is not a morality but a tyranny.

The sciences viewed simply as bodies of facts or conclusions are ethically neutral, at least insofar as facts by themselves do not dictate the ends for which they shall be used. If science is to have important moral significance, its ideals—and consequently its method—must intervene in human affairs. In order for this intervention to occur, the continuity between ordinary living and scientific behavior must be acknowledged, for the ideals of science could never function in practical affairs were not ordinary activity potentially capable of being controlled in some measure by the procedures of science.

It has been recognized that a close relation exists between the solution of problems in everyday life and the procedures of the laboratory, that the method of science is a development and refinement of certain procedures which ordinary men have always used in the business of living. Men tend to be scientific in common-day affairs; we have the injunction "Be practical." In a limited sense we are scientific when we take the facts of our experience into account; we entertain hypotheses when we outline possible plans of action; we draw the implications of these hypotheses when we weigh the consequences of our proposals. Science has taken over the rules of successful action, has developed and refined them, and designated them the method of discovery.

This continuity between ordinary problem-solving and scientific method has been obscured by the dominance of the sciences as institutions in the modern world. Science has largely been identified with the physical sciences, and their rapid development, characterized by the increasing abstraction of their subject matter, has separated off the method of science from the common sense of which it is a refinement. Inquiry has been associated with the laboratory and a high degree of specialized knowledge, while the sciences have been valued primarily as technologies. They have not been especially prized for the implications of their method for everyday life, however much people may willingly accept the new conclusions which they offer.

But to recognize the origin of science in everyday activity is not to say that science is nothing but common-sense problem-solving. In dealing with our everyday affairs, we are usually concerned simply

with the attainment of the practical goal in which we are interested and not with the attainment of truth. If we desire truth, our action must be oriented toward *more* than the solution of the particular problem at hand. Whatever else it may be, scientific truth is also a verbal statement; and its discovery requires at least a consciousness and systematization seldom attained by ordinary problem-solving.

Yet scientific activity, even though it is directed toward the attainment of truth, is not by itself moral in character. In the laboratory, the procedures of science have become so formalized, so universally accepted, and so firm a part of laboratory tradition that there is no pressure for the operation of conscious choice. Of course, participation in cooperative inquiry was once a significant moral choice even in the physical sciences because it was carried on in the face of pressing, because socially sanctioned, alternatives. The significance of the historical choice that was made lay not in its being on the side of truth—everyone is for that—but rather in its allegiance to a special, unsanctioned conception of truth and method. While the moral problems generated by the struggle for autonomous sciences have largely receded in importance today, they continue to survive wherever the totalitarian state rules on matters of fact in areas where truth threatens its ideology.

Outside the laboratory, a devotion to the method of science does represent a moral choice. Disinterested inquiry is an ideal when men believe they ought to maintain their devotion to it in the pursuit of practical goals. It is an ideal which is, moreover, incompatible with many highly prized practical goals. This incompatibility raises the problem of choosing between the ideal of free inquiry and other ends, and of ascertaining what precisely must be done in order to fulfill the conditions of the method of science. Loyalty to the method of science entails, of course, more than being scientific in the choice of means toward practical goals. It involves rather the pursuit of practical goals in such a way as to maintain the conditions of free inquiry. It is a respect for truth not simply as an expedient in human affairs but as an end.

It must be pointed out that in the context of social action not all the aspects of the method of science have equal moral significance, for it is only in the conflict of opposing choices, of alternative roads, that intelligent moral action arises. Some of the procedures that scientists find it necessary to employ, such as abstraction and measurement, have never been objectionable, except to some philosophers, or prejudicial to practical goals.

For social action, the procedures which do have a peculiar moral significance are those which safeguard truth from legislative fiat and from the rule of extra-scientific authority and privilege. Truth is always in danger of being legislated precisely because social power is usually maintained on the basis of *certain* facts, and stands the risk of falling when they are contravened. And social action oriented toward the achievement and maintenance of power is by the same token likely to run sharply into the problem of choosing between its practical goal and the maintenance of free inquiry. In view of the fact that power has a vested interest in the continued acceptance of certain

facts, it is not surprising that the sciences have developed as relatively autonomous institutions, have in other words tried to sever themselves from the entanglements of other, and possibly incompatible, human motives and aims. Even when political leaders are interested in free inquiry, the exigencies of politics may force its abandonment. But the choice is a crucial one, and is usually a moral capitulation.

Put quite briefly, the maintenance of inquiry as a free and autonomous pursuit depends upon several related conceptions, revolving around the notion that the test of truth is objective. For the purposes of this discussion, they may be outlined as follows:

1. Inquiry demands that truth be public;
2. Inquiry respects facts as evidence;
3. Inquiry is indifferent to the source of its hypotheses.

These conceptions have the consequences of defining scientific authority to the exclusion of other social authorities in the realm of truth. When free inquiry is held as an ideal in social action, they ought directly to control behavior. As the basis of a morality, they ought to raise serious problems for political activity.

1. Inquiry demands that truth be public in three ways.

- a. The specific procedures used to arrive at any true statement ought to be possible of execution by any normal individual. This does not mean, of course, that as a matter of fact all normal individuals have acquired the means for participation in inquiry; it does mean that the procedures specified are capable of being learned. The procedures of science, therefore, cannot depend upon special faculties or powers granted by nature to a chosen few. The biological or physical or mechanical equipment necessary is possessed by all of us, however, undeveloped as it may be in any instance. The ability to use scientific procedures may not then depend upon any special way of knowing such as intuition nor upon a unique way of thinking such as the dialectic, possessed by some and not by others,

- b. Truth is public in the sense that it is submitted for verification to some qualified public.

- c. There is nothing in the nature of truth which prohibits its use by any group. Every individual is, as Dewey has put it, "the ultimate intellectual consumer."

In all three cases, the scientific public is in fact a limited one, for not everyone has learned to make sound judgments in any particular field. But while the public in any given instance is limited in fact, there is neither an a priori membership, nor a priori restrictions on membership. Thus, no social group is, by virtue solely of its position, automatically included or excluded from participation in a scientific public.

Truth conceived as public presents a demand upon political leaderships. It not only prohibits the suppression of facts, but makes obligatory the more positive policy of the presentation of facts so that sound judgments by the ranks may be possible. Often enough, inner-party expediency in terms of factional struggle is the criterion for the dissemination of facts necessary for sound judgment. Anyone who has witnessed the sudden revelation of truths during a factional crisis will appreciate the moral character of the conception of truth as public.

In terms of national politics, the propaganda technicians provide a case in point. With the development of a more extensive knowledge of social affairs, governments have enlisted the aid of social scientists in manipulating the masses. While they use the results of inquiry to formulate successful propaganda, much as the advertising executive employs psychological investigation, they depend upon the private character of the facts they use for the success of their efforts. To make the techniques and the fact of mass manipulation public might very well defeat the aims of the propaganda. This example reveals from another point of view the difference between the use of the results of inquiry for practical ends and the maintenance of the conditions of free inquiry as a goal in itself.

2. Inquiry not only respects facts as evidence, but actively searches them out. In everyday life, we are interested in facts primarily as descriptions of conditions which will help or hinder us in the pursuit of our practical goals. Only incidentally do we care about facts as evidence; in general we take a positive or negative attitude toward facts in accordance with their consequences for our ordinary ends. In disinterested inquiry, on the other hand, we take a positive or negative attitude toward facts as they are relevant or irrelevant to the process of verification. For the method of science, the bearing that facts have on extra-scientific goals in no way determines whether or not they will be inspected as evidence.

In social action, unless there are facts which are treated as evidence, genuinely responsible political behavior is impossible. In any organization, politics is largely a matter of choosing effective means, that is, a program, for the achievement of proximate goals. The effectiveness of a political program depends upon the existence of an actual means-end relation between program and goal. The program can be judged only when this relation and the evidence for both its affirmation *and* denial are made explicit. A program can seriously be considered experimental only when the conditions for its failure are stated beforehand. In this way alone will the membership be able to make adequate judgments as to both the effectiveness of the program itself and the responsibility of the leadership for its success or failure.

No policy, then, is fully defined until the conditions are outlined under which it would be false. For example, the position of those who support the present war as a means toward democratic goals remains incomplete and irresponsible so long as they fail to specify the conditions under which the war would no longer be progressive. With the conditions unspecified, they escape the responsibility of taking unfavorable facts into account and of judging the consequences for their professed goals of, for example, British action in India. Likewise, support of the trade union movement is undefined so long as the conditions remain unstated under which support would be withdrawn.

In terms of inner-party politics, the search for and acceptance of factual evidence for or against a program attains moral status because programmatic differences and the achievement of leadership are interwoven. Since the ability to carry out a program depends upon securing control of the apparatus for its execution, the formulation of a program is influenced not only by the common organizational goal but

by the demands of a struggle for leadership as well. In such a struggle, evidence against a program may well be an embarrassment, and a judicious obscurantism the better part of valor.

3. To say that inquiry is indifferent to the source of its hypotheses, is to emphasize that the criteria of validity are objective. It might be said, in fact, that inquiry is eclectic, at least insofar as it sets no a priori restrictions on the kind of theory it will admit.

In any political organization, beliefs harden very quickly into dogma, to some extent at least because the maintenance of a given leadership and sometimes the life of the organization itself depend upon them. As a result, the dogma itself is prized, and radical changes in belief may be passed off as enlightened exegeses of a received doctrine. The source of hypotheses becomes traditionalized, while proof is viewed as conformity, not to fact, but to doctrine.

Again, social action oriented toward power-goals is likely to have to choose between its practical goal and a loyalty to objective standards of validity, whenever truth lies outside the dogma of the group.

The above discussion has been based on the notion that science, ethically neutral by itself, has a moral character (1) when both the ideal of scientific truth and the method of science intervene in human affairs, and (2) when that intervention presents problems of choice—of a crucial and far-reaching nature—between practical goals and loyalty to the method of science. The choice has been viewed as arising between the method of science and the achievement and maintenance of leadership. It is not possible to say here whether or not under existing conditions the alternatives are disjunctive and, if they are, which ought to be chosen. But, at any rate, the alternatives will be felt as real and pressing only if the methods of free inquiry are viewed as capable of functioning in day-to-day activity. To be so viewed, they must be analyzed into rules for political behavior; and what has been said has been an attempt to sketch briefly the anatomy of a political morality inspired by the methods of free inquiry.

Up for Comment...

From the factories and rural villages of the world's greatest colonial prize, the Indian masses have struck a mighty blow against the *status quo*. Here is revolution, thundering in a language no censorship can silence. Here is a test no niceties of political dialectic can serve to obscure. The caliber of every democrat and socialist is measured by his answer to one unequivocal question: For or against the struggle of the Indian people.

This is a battle for big stakes. Not India alone, but the future of the whole Middle East is at issue. Think of it: an India out loose from the British Raj would become the political center for the movements of colonial revolt. The leadership which brought this about would be catapulted to a position of international authority. And this struggle

strikes at the heart of the very idea of an Imperial System. It challenges the basis of Churchill's political leadership. Can anyone believe that this empire-protector will yield to the exhortations of impotent liberals while Indian rebels tear down the house he is waging war to defend? Others may be dumbfounded, but the responsible leaders of English capitalism know what the score is. They are fighting for their social lives.

England has met the Indian demand for freedom with a double face: One a traditional imperialist rejection, a policy of military brutality, and the other a promise of freedom after the war—chiefly for American consumption. The imperialists do not balk at the seeming contradiction of the liberal promises; they recognize it as an old game. For after all, "after the war" is at least a temporary reprieve. The notion that India will be given freedom after the war is calculated to have a specific effect now. India has exploded the myth of the "democratic" war, and millions have felt the impact of that explosion. Thus the promise of freedom must be administered as a hasty sedative. The guarantee, characteristically enough, is a defensive strategy; a delaying action to prevent the rallying of progressive forces in response to the militant action of the Indian people.

This response was most needed from America. It had been hoped for, relied on, expected. Surely enlightened American opinion would not forget its chorused former assurances of support to Indian independence! But as many have learned and more have yet to learn, it is one thing to be for democracy in the abstract, quite another to support the concrete action it involves. When the time came for the American liberals to put in their chips, it was . . . "sorry, but we have another engagement." And indeed they had. The grim logic of total war demands that the consequences of political commitment be accepted. Hence the debacle.

Democracy will not come out of the bureaus of Washington and London; the motor force democracy is the struggle of the plebeian. Gandhi once again arrogated to himself the right to negotiate secretly, denying his supporters the right of check. (Now that Louis Fischer has revealed something of the bargain-counter atmosphere that prevailed, it is easy to understand the need for secrecy.) But the Indian people exercised their right of control nonetheless, by the simple expedient of taking to the streets and *acting* upon the policy of militant struggle for freedom.

The native Indian bourgeoisie have a powerful grip on the leadership of the Congress Party; this fact explains much concerning the direction of that leadership. On one hand there is the congenital capitalist fear and antipathy for the direct action of the masses; they want to gain power the dry way of mediation and bargain. On the other hand the Indian industrialists know too well that 'you can't do business with England.' (The potential pro-Japanism in certain layers of the Congress is born of this dilemma.)

The act of ousting the British poses instantly the problem of establishing a new structure for Indian society. It poses the question of power. This is what is new in this Indian drive to independence. What started as an offer hacking away for pieces of freedom has been

turned into open revolution by the Indian people in their articulate hundreds of thousands. The original anti-British objective has, in a sense, been by-passed. Soon to dominate the Indian scene will be the problems of mass education, the techniques of democratic representation and control, the struggle between Indian capitalism and the Indian proletariat, the ending of the caste system—the related problems of the struggle towards a democratic society.

The Indian people are in the streets. politically alive and strong. Problems of political decision have burst into their daily lives; and in solving them they improvise new social techniques. Their struggle has placed political power closer to the masses. The trade unionism, the community organization, the techniques of such a struggle implement that gain.

While unconditionally supporting their fight for independence, we hope that our Indian comrades will shape their struggle so as to meet the needs of their double goal; freedom from England and a genuinely democratic India.

M.E.

* * * *

An item in the press casually offers another indication of the “democratic” nature of U. S. participation in this war. Properly analyzed it is another argument, minor only because of its daily unobserved occurrence, for those who genuinely struggle for a democratic world.

Leon Henderson was reporting on commodity rationing. When asked what items were scheduled for rationing, he replied that he could not answer because were the information to leak out the public might rush madly to buy up all available stock. The implications of this situation are clear. The assumption on which such a policy of administrative secrecy is based is that the general population is involved in the war as a lump mass, unenthusiastic and pettily self-seeking rather than as a nation of thinking, serious individuals pledged to a war for democracy. And the concept of government implied is one of maneuvering, deceit, and cajolery — an administration that *manipulates* the mass.

A key to all situations where a nation or community is heading (even if temporarily) in a democratic direction is a special characteristic in the daily workings of social relationship. And that is a greater participation of the mass in the solution of such decisive daily problems as food distribution, control of arms, housing, etc., and always a salutary excitement and concern with the solution of these problems. The conduct of these relationships are so much the domain of the state; these new participation mechanisms are a democratic check on the state. Social initiative and control thus lies in functions accessible to greater masses of the people. No social development which does not feature this characteristic ever becomes or remains democratic.

Democracy is possible, too, only when the governed are capable of understanding government policy and action. Masses can be educated in such matters only by having to solve such problems, by learning in terms of the consequences of their own activity. If this is true, then the daily conduct of the war by the Roosevelt Administration has instituted the opposite pattern of relation between mass and state.

America's path to war was encompassed by the noble avowal of peace ends and by inching steps to war. One can only admire the brilliance by which each step was made to appear as an extemporaneous solution of a new problem rather than as a series of planned measures related to an original goal. Peacetime conscription through the temporary restrictions to the army fighting on all fronts; from non-belligerence to alliance with Britain; the cynical emasculation of the labor movement done in the name of its greater good.

For those who protest some form of democracy as their goal it should be stated that democracy is a stern task-master in the selection of means, permitting no such opportunism or conniving as the more limited (and lenient) end of power and power maintenance. No matter how great the menace of Hitler to the democratic ideal, how immediate and urgent the need to smash fascism, the urgency does not change the relation of means to ends. That ideal can still only be defended by means harmonious with democracy.

The development of the American war state has shown that, without the *democratic* intervention of the masses, the outcome of the war can be nothing less than a form of statism. The conduct of the war has seen the development of the *complete state*—initiator, judge, and executor; and concomitantly the totalitarianization of the mass. This last should be the disheartening aspect for those who have tried to find a temporary strategy in the camp of the state bureaucracy. M. E.

AUDEN: THE QUALITY OF DOUBT

The "Double Man" has been treated with consideration by the majority of reviewers. These registered their approval of the expressed religiosity of tone, the inward searching doubts concerning the viability of a humane revolutionary program, the bursting bubble of "clever hopes" expiring at the end of a "low, dishonest decade." A congenial attitude was evident toward the feeling that

"All our reflections turn about
A common meditative norm,
Retrenchment, Sacrifice, Reform."

Be that as it may; we leave their motives and motivations unquestioned, desiring, rather, to explore certain political problems, incidental to the poetry as such yet relevant to the attitudes expressed therein.

Auden is certainly one of those "whose works are in better taste than their lives." His early verse, ideologically viewed, was brashly positive, didactic, clever, facile, and possessed of a nasty Stalinist bent. The undercur-

rent of questioning uncertainty, often stilled but always there, became dominant only late in the decade. A "New Year's Letter" (1941), a part of this latest volume, is the organized end-product of these growing doubts, and its moral subtlety, receptivity, and sensitivity is close to brilliant. The bitterly acquired political wisdom of a generation seems to flourish in the pen and stagnate in the poet. Of course, being poetry, the problem is only stated; but a good statement is half a solution.

It is not the need for specific moral decisions by the poet which so troubles the verse, as it is the feeling that the basic issues of morality itself are undefined, immediate and pressing — a common enough revelation of the age's moral vacancy. Combined with this, is the guilt-fear of the individual for the crimes committed around him, the responsibility of even passive contribution, the warping of ideals by greed and egoism, which leads Auden to say:

"Our million individual deeds
Omissions, vanities, and creeds,
Put through the statistician's hoop
The gross behavior of a group."

To put the issue more bluntly than the poetry permits, what is being advanced is a working concept of original sin, a concept which gives the conditions of idealism, and forces to the fore unremittingly a sharp, cynical analysis of self and others, ends and means. Rather than hypostasizing goodness as a quality which by hypothesis some men must possess, let it be remembered that men in all ways seem better than they are. Those who see the world of the future making tremendous forward leaps through the agency of technology and the applied social sciences, or who believe in a complete spiritual regeneration of a majority of men are deceiving themselves. The permeating fact of evil, both past and present, speaks differently.

Scientists and non-scientists alike live on an inclined plane of credulity and it is given to no one type of mind to discern the totality of truth. The science of politics, consistent with the nature of science as such, is a process of abstraction, simplification, and logical exclusion. It strives for the quantitative and minimizes the qualitative. The partial efficacy of all this brooks no denial, but its partiality must be insisted upon. A systematic rationality of action is encouraged which is often a false rationality of unity, simplicity, and generality. As a counterweight to this exists the insights of ontology (to borrow a term made current by John Crowe Ransom), which attempt to see things wholly, qualitatively, in their full particularity. It is contemplative, not utilitarian, and its medium is the arts, not the sciences. The three main weapons of the ontological view are tragedy, irony, and comedy. Tragedy offers a realism of its own against ingenuous enterprise, warning against "excessive expectations as to the prosperity of structures." Irony exists when the spectator is given an insight superior to that of the actor. When spectator and actor are one, this insight

is that of the "double man," inducing humility and possibly a certain measure of self-contempt. The comic corrective ("sense of humor") is a reaction against human acts being determined by abstract principles and is essentially critical of programs. It is these constituents of the double or ontological view which engender the quality of doubt, respect the headiness and loss of balance as the tax which all action must pay, and force a constant reference of means (abstract political principles) to ends (concrete, colorful humanity.)

The juxtaposition of personal and impersonal, private existence and public politics, its ensuing dialectic self-analysis with its confession that truth is equivocal—all of this is a vitiation of animal confidence and vigor, a symptom of approaching age. It cannot be erased by a repetitive moral earnestness which serves only to blur the perception of the actual. The crisis in conscience is deep and enduring and any renewal of heart will have to accept it as a fellow-traveller. On the other hand, to elevate doubt into a political program is distinctly impracticable, having the common consequences of accepting the status quo as a sure good contrasted to all kinds of future imaginable evils. Many have advanced from doubt to negation, decrying political movements in toto as destined to fall short of their ends. Even though these prophecies bear fruit, they are irrelevant to an individual's participation, which is based primarily upon moral considerations. Whether a man lives or dies in vain can never be measured by the collective activity of his fellows. It is only seen in the way he faces his problems, in the way he resolves his inner conflicts, in his deliberate exercise of choice. And the integrity of the intellect will always add its admonition in the face of chaos:

"But ideas can be true although
men die."

WILLIAM FERRY.

* The Double Man, by W. H. Auden,
Random House. \$2.00.

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